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## **Department's Fraud Prevention Strategies Confirmed by Legislative Audit Bureau**

Today the Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) released their audit of the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program, confirming the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is on track toward eliminating fraud in the program. Wisconsin Shares provides subsidized child care for more than 60,000 children in 34,000 families.

"Preventing fraud in the Wisconsin Shares program has been an emphasis in our Department since we opened our doors last year," DCF Secretary Reggie Bicha said. "I am pleased to see the LAB audit supports the steps we are already taking to improve this program, which by providing access to essential child care, opens the door to financial security for tens of thousands."

The Department has involved many partners in their efforts to reduce fraud in the Wisconsin Shares Program, including counties, child care providers, law enforcement agencies, advocacy groups and legislators such as Senator Bob Jauch and Representative Tamara Grigsby.

"I am pleased with the Department's leadership in taking action," Senator Jauch said. "The joint efforts by the Legislature and the Administration will lead to meaningful reforms to curb abuse and hold abusers accountable."

The Department is already taking significant steps to address the major issues raised in the audits, namely proper eligibility and authorization for enrollees and intentional provider fraud.

"These troubling revelations highlight the absolute necessity of the reforms the Joint Finance Committee made to the Wisconsin Shares Program in the state budget," Representative Grigsby said. "This vital program has been slandered by the abuse conducted by some of its participants and we must do everything we can to restore integrity to the Wisconsin Shares Program."

A number of child advocacy groups have also commented on the audit. Their support of on-going initiatives at the Department reinforces the importance of these strategies and the additional insight provided by the LAB.

"We look forward to working with the Department of Children and Families as they continue to confront corrupt providers who are hindering the child care field in Wisconsin and ultimately the development of our children," said Dave Edie, the Early Education Policy Analyst for the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families. "Their efforts to shine a light on those corners where fraud is hiding will strengthen this program and lead to higher quality child care."

Wisconsin Shares is a vital program for many low-income families. It serves the dual purpose of allowing parents to work while giving their children access to child care the family would otherwise not be able to afford.

“The care children receive in their first few years of life is critical to their intellectual and social development,” said Ruth Schmidt, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association. “Wisconsin Shares creates opportunities for children and provides a path to prosperity for our families, our communities and our state. There is nobody more committed to the Department’s efforts to eliminate fraud than the thousands of high-quality providers around the state of Wisconsin who serve children in the Wisconsin Shares program.”

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